

**STATEMENT OF
BRIAN E. LAWRENCE
ASSISTANT NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY 4, 2005**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of the 1.2 million members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), I appreciate the opportunity to submit for the record our views on the following bill and draft bills:

- H.R. 419 the Hire Veterans Act of 2004;
- Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Reauthorization Act of 2005;
- Servicemembers' Health Insurance Protection Act of 2005; and
- Servicemembers' Taxation Protection Act of 2005.

H.R. 419 the Hire Veterans Act of 2004

Public Law 107-288, the Jobs for Veterans Act, enacted November 7, 2002, established within the Department of Labor (DOL) the President's National Hire Veterans Committee (PNHVC). The PNHVC was created to encourage employers throughout the nation to hire veterans by raising awareness of the high-level skills and leadership abilities men and women may acquire while serving in the Armed Forces. Veterans offer much to the civilian workforce, yet many employers overlook the value of military experience.

In accordance with the Act, DOL submitted annual reports on PNHVC accomplishments. Review of such reports indicates that since its inception, the PNHVC has:

- Initiated a nationwide campaign to put employers, that are seeking to hire veterans, in contact with DOL One-Stop Career Centers;
- Launched a website that includes a guide for employers, a translator that provides the civilian application of military skills, links to job sites, and an online resume writer developed for people with military experience;
- Initiated an advertising campaign conveying the value veterans bring to the workplace;
- Mailed to selected executive readers of Business Week, an issue with a wrap-around cover 'outsert' program. The periodical included interviews with four business leaders including Robert Lutz, Vice Chairman of General Motors; Jackson Moore, CEO-designate of Regions Financial Corporation; and Bob Nardelli CEO of Home Depot;
- Worked with state governors to declare Hire Vets First month;

- Worked directly with employers throughout America (Home Depot hired over 13,000 veterans in 2004);
- Attended over 100 events in 25 states to highlight the Hire Vets First message.

The DAV commends the PNHVC for its accomplishments.

H.R. 419 would provide a three year extension of the PNHVC, which was set to expire December 31, 2005. The bill would fund the PNHVC through fiscal year (FY) 2008 by taking .5 percent from amounts made available to DOL for the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs).

In its April 18, 2002 testimony on the Jobs for Veterans Act, the DAV supported the establishment of the PNHVC. The DAV maintains its position that raising employer awareness of veterans' skills is important; however, the DAV cannot support extending the PNHVC at the expense of the DVOP and LVER programs.

DVOP/LVERs provide important jobs services to disabled and other veterans by serving as intermediaries between them and employers. Our support of the DVOP/LVER programs is based on resolutions adopted by our membership that call for adequate funding for DVOP/LVERs. Support of H.R. 419, as it is currently written, would be contrary to this resolution because it would reduce funding for DVOP/LVER programs. The DAV would support reauthorization of the PNHVC if its funding was not taken from another vital veterans' program.

Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Reauthorization Act of 2005

This draft bill would reauthorize HVRP for FY 2007 and FY 2008 at \$50 million per year. HVRP is an employment services program established to help homeless veterans reintegrate into the labor force and attain financial independence. HVRP assists homeless veterans via grants to state and local Workforce Investment Boards, commercial agencies, and non-profit organizations, including faith based and community based organizations. Qualified agencies directly assist homeless veterans with job placement, training, counseling, and resume preparation.

The DAV is highly supportive of HVRP and other homeless veterans' initiatives. It is an unfortunate and sad fact that many veterans, for various reasons, have been unable to make their way in the society they once swore to defend. Such veterans exist without decent shelter, adequate nutrition, or medical care. Services provided by HVRP can mean the difference between a veteran living on the streets or living in transitional housing until they are capable of providing for themselves.

As a member of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV), the DAV supports the testimony and recommendations submitted by the Coalition on April 15, 2005, to the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. Therein, the Coalition urged Congress to appropriate at least

\$50 million for HVRP in FY 2006. This amount would enable HVRP grantees to reach approximately 24,000 homeless veterans.

The DAV is pleased that this legislation is reflective of the Coalition's recommendation and that the Subcommittee concurs with the notion that our nation owes a debt of gratitude to veterans. The DAV fully supports this important bill.

In addition to legislative advocacy on behalf of homeless veterans, it is important to note that the DAV takes an active role in seeking to prevent and end homelessness among our nation's veterans. The DAV Homeless Veterans Initiative, which is supported by DAV's Charitable Service Trust and Colorado Trust, promotes the development of supportive housing and services to help homeless veterans become productive, self-sufficient members of society. Since 1989, DAV allocations for homeless projects have exceeded \$2 million.

Servicemembers' Health Insurance Protection Act of 2005

This draft bill would limit premium increases on reinstated health insurance for servicemembers who are released from active service, and it would preserve employer sponsored health plan coverage for certain reserve members who acquire TriCare eligibility.

In accordance with our Constitution and Bylaws, the DAV's legislative focus is on benefits and services for service-connected disabled veterans, their dependents, and survivors. Because the issues addressed within this legislation are not specific to its legislative focus, the DAV has no resolutions pertaining to this draft bill. However, since it would benefit members of the Armed Forces, we have no objection to its favorable consideration.

Servicemembers' Taxation Protection Act of 2005

This draft bill would prevent double taxation of servicemembers when the laws of a tax jurisdiction do not provide a credit against use, excise, or similar taxes the servicemember previously paid to another tax jurisdiction.

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Conclusion

The DAV commends Chairman Boozeman, Ranking Member Herseth, and the members of the Subcommittee for their bipartisan efforts to enhance employment opportunities and provide protections for veterans and members of the Armed Forces. From its founding in 1920 to serve as the voice for America's disabled veterans, the DAV has recognized that, along with quality health care and adequate compensation, gainful employment is necessary to allow most

disabled veterans to attain rehabilitation and a life of normalcy. The DAV is pleased that the Subcommittee shares its sentiment and looks forward to working together on these, and future issues. This concludes my statement.